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ABSTRACT

Although recognition of problems posed by critical client statements and recommendations for counselors' understanding, empathy, and confrontation abound, interventions to aid counselors in coping with critical client statements are rare. Graduate-level counselor trainees (N=40) were assigned to one of four methods of supervision: interpersonal process recall, modeling, stress inoculation, or a control condition. Each subject received two individual 15-minute supervisory sessions of the same type of supervision. Subjects then responded to videotapes of clients displaying critical client behaviors such as anger, defensiveness, manipulation or neutral statements. Subjects' oral responses to client behaviors were rated on four dimensions: reflection of feelings, reflection of content, delivery, and appropriateness. Data analysis revealed significant main effects for both method of supervision and type of critical client statement. Results suggest that counselor trainees' responses to critical client statements can be affected by brief exposure to supervision. Modeling tends to emerge as the most effective method of supervision in increasing reflection of feelings and appropriateness; defensiveness tends to emerge as the most difficult type of critical client statement. (Author/NRB)

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IPR, Modeling, and Stress Inoculation

Supervision for Critical Client Statements

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SUMMARY

This study examined the effects of Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR), Behavioral Modeling (MOD), and Stress Inoculation (SI) supervision methods on the production of effective counseling responses by counselor trainees. A second purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of angry, defensive, and manipulative critical client statements on the responses of trainees.

Critical client statements represent moments of special importance in the counseling process, in that they both signal a crucial issue for the client and produce a distracting roadblock for the counselor (Kell & Mueller, 1966; Spivack, 1973). Anger can function to disrupt the ongoing interaction by agitation, interference with attention and information processing, and by inducing impulsivity (Novaco, 1975). Defensiveness arises from attempts by the client to protect self-esteem and hold down anxiety levels, but results in hampering open communication (Johnson and Vestermark, 1970). Through manipulation, the client attempts to render the counselor ineffective (Kell & Mueller, 1966) and take control of the counseling situation (Johnson & Vestermark, 1970).

Although both recognition of the problems posed by critical client statements and recommendations for counselors' understanding, empathy, and confrontation abound (Brammer & Shostrom, 1968; Johnson & Vestermark, 1970), interventions

to aid counselors to cope with critical client statements are practically nonexistent. Counseling supervision would appear to be a natural response to the need for intervention, in that it serves as the traditional mechanism for skill acquisition and facilitation of performance in counseling (Boyd, 1978; Ford, 1979). The goal of supervision in working with counselors who are facing critical client statements would be to enhance the counselor's ability to recognize the barriers erected by these statements and to respond to each effectively. An effective response, based upon recommendations in the literature, would include empathic understanding, communicated through the reflection of the affect and content components of the client's talk, and recognition of the interpersonal dynamics inherent in the interaction, translated into confrontation and placing responsibility for the client's feelings squarely on the client.

For this study, two existing approaches to supervision, Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) and Behavioral Modeling (MOD), and a third drawn from the cognitive behavior therapy technique of stress inoculation (SI) were compared in their effectiveness to facilitate counselor trainees' responses to critical client statements. A control supervision condition was also included. The relative degree of difficulty posed by each of the types of critical client statements--angry, defensive, manipulative, and neutral--was also assessed.

Subjects

The subjects for the study were 40 counseling student trainees enrolled in a beginning master's level course, Introduction to Helping Relationships, who volunteered to participated in exchange for the opportunity to practice counseling with videotaped clients. Subjects were randomly assigned by sex, by course section, and by level of trait anxiety, as measured by the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), Form X-2 (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970) to one of four conditions of Method of Supervision. The subjects ranged in age from 21 to 50 years (M=30.24, SD=7.55 years) and included 28 women and 12 men. The groups did not vary significantly in trait anxiety levels, $F(3,36)=.44$, $p=.72$ N.S.

Methods and Procedure

Two independent variables were manipulated. The first variable, Method of Supervsion, had four levels: (a) Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR), (b) Behavioral Modeling (MOD), (c) Stress Inoculation (SI) and (d) Control (C).

The second independent variable was the Type of Critical Client Statements. These were in the form of a series of videotaped Client Vignettes (CV), consisting of 12 client statements, enacted by individuals roleplaying typical client behaviors. These Client Vignettes were drawn from four categories of client statements, one of which was Neutral, non-stressful statements used for comparison. The other three categories represented the three remaining levels of

the Critical Client Statements variable: (a) Angry statements, (b) Defensive statements, and (c) Manipulative statements.

Each subject was assigned to one Method of Supervision and received exposure to all four levels of the Type of Critical Client Statements factor, in a split-plot factorial, repeated measures design (Kirk, 1968).

Each subject received two individual 15-minute supervisory sessions of the same type of supervision method. One supervision session followed after exposure to each of two practice Client Vignette videotape segments. The IPR supervision condition was based on the method proposed by Kagan and Krathwohl (1967), in which the supervisor's role is to use inductive questions to direct the counselor's attention to thoughts, feelings, and intentions of the client and the counselor. The MOD supervision condition involved the supervisor modeling an appropriate counseling response to each client statement, after the counselor's (subject's) response had been reviewed. The modeled responses were developed beforehand, based upon the ratings of alternative responses given by three experienced counseling doctoral student judges. The SI supervision condition was developed from the cognitive behavioral therapeutic technique of stress inoculation (Meichenbaum & Turk, 1974) and included an explanation of the rationale for its use, presentation of coping self-statements to be used in responding to clients, and practice in using the self-statements. Subjects in the Control condition used the

two 15-minute supervision periods to review his or her audiotaped responses to the Client Vignettes, without the help of a supervisor. Review of the audiotaped responses of each subject occured in each supervision condition, and formed the basis for the supervisor's interventions in the three treatment conditions.

The supervisors for the study were five doctoral or advanced master's counseling students with extensive supervision experience. Each supervisor was trained in all three supervision methods, provided with cue cards of the procedures of each of the supervision methods, and given opportunity to practice the methods is mock supervision sessions until they were mastered. During the experiment, the order of the methods used by the supervisor was rotated and each supervisor administered all supervision methods.

Three videotaped sequences of Client Vignettes (CV) were developed. Two CV sequences were used as stimuli for practice counselor responses, which were utilized during the two supervision modules and not assessed formally. The third CV sequence was used after the two supervision sessions were completed, as an assessment instrument of Type of Critical Client Statements. The vignettes were drawn from a pool of potential items that were unanimously judged by three Counselor Education faculty members to represent angry, defensive, manipulative, or neutral client statements. The resulting items were assigned randomly to one of the three CV tapes and ordered randomly for presentation on each tape. Each CV tape had 12 items, three of each type of

critical client statements. Four actor clients appeared on each CV segment, alternating their order of appearance and roleplaying the client statements in the predetermined random order. Each client statement took approximately 10 seconds to present and was followed by a 20-second pause. During this pause, a sign appeared on the screen, instructing the subject to state a response. The responses were recorded on audiotape.

The oral counseling responses made by the subjects to the final assessment CV sequence were evaluated on four dimensions as to what degree they represented effective counseling responses. The dimensions were (a) Reflection of Feelings, (b) Reflection of Content, (c) Delivery (precision and smoothness), and (d) Appropriateness (appreciation for underlying dynamics, confrontation or interpretation). The responses of each subject were listened to by a rater, and each response was given a score of one to five on each dimension. The raters were three trained, experienced professional counselors, who were blind to Method of Supervision and to the identity of the subject. They were trained to reliability on all dimensions during group practice sessions, with reliability coefficients ranging from .70 for Delivery to .98 for Reflection of Feelings.

The procedure began with the random assignment of the subjects to each of the four Methods of Supervision. Each subject was assigned to a 1-hour block of time in a private, individual counseling practicum room. The subject began

by viewing the first practice CV segment on a videotape monitor and stating responses to the clients out loud, so as to be recorded on an audiotape recorder. At the conclusion of the first sequence, a supervisor entered the room and reviewed the audiotape just made, with the assigned supervision intervention. Subjects in the Control group merely reviewed their own audiotapes alone. The same procedure was repeated with a second practice CV segment and a second 15-minute supervision session, with each subject receiving the same Method of Supervision and the same supervisor as before, and the Control subjects engaging in self-review. A third CV segment concluded the procedure, and the subject's responses to this CV were later scored by the raters.

The data was analyzed by means of a 4 X 4 multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures on the second factor, using the Wilkes-Lambda criterion. Univariate analyses (ANOVAS) of significant multivariate effects were calculated, and post hoc Tukey comparisons were computed to determine specific differences between groups and levels.

Results

Using MANOVA, both independent variables, Method of Supervision and Type of Critical Client Statements, were found to have significant main effects, $F=2.19$, $p<.019$, and $F=2.87$, $p<.013$, respectively. Univariate analysis of variance of Method of Supervision findings on each dependent variable revealed significant main effects for Method of Supervision

on Reflection of Feelings ($F(3, 36)=5.53$, $p<.003$) and Appropriateness ($F(3,36)=2.87$, $p<.05$). Post hoc comparisons of pairs of group means on these dependent variables, using Tukey's test, indicated that for Reflection of Feelings, scores of MOD subjects were significantly greater than those of each of the other supervision groups, and SI subjects' scores were significantly greater than those of the Control group. On the Appropriateness variable, scores of MOD subjects were significantly greater than those in the Control or SI groups, and IPR subjects' scores greater than Control.

In further analyzing the significant effect of Type of Critical Client Statements, analyses of variance with repeated measures for one dependent variable at a time, using a multivariate approach, were performed. Reflection of Feelings and Appropriateness showed significant main effects for Type of Critical Client Statements, $F(3,34)=8.93$, $p<.001$; $F(3,34)=4.34$, $p<.011$, respectively. Tukey comparisons for Reflection of Feelings indicated that responses to Neutral statements had higher scores than responses to Defensive or Manipulative client statements, and responses to Angry statements bettered those made to Defensive statements. Responses to Neutral statements had significantly higher scores than to Defensive statements on the Appropriateness variable.

Conclusions

On the basis of these results, it can be concluded that counselor trainees' responses to Critical Client Statements

can be affected by brief exposure to supervision. MOD appears to be the most effective supervision method tested, in increasing Reflection of Feelings and Appropriateness response dimensions. IPR also favorably affected Appropriateness and SI favorably affected Reflection of Feelings in responses, although MOD was more effective for the latter.

Types of Critical Client Statements vary in the degree of difficulty they pose to subjects in forming effective responses. Defensiveness was most difficult, and led to less effective Reflection of Feelings and Appropriateness response dimensions. Angry client statements produced more Reflection of Feelings in counselor responses than Defensiveness, and thus appeared to be an easier client expression of feeling for counselor subjects to cope with.

Neither Delivery nor Reflection of Content dimensions of responses were significantly affected by Method of Supervision or Type of Critical Client Statements.

This study demonstrated both that critical client statements pose difficulties for counselor trainees and that supervision can help trainees cope with such statements more effectively. The results add further support for the effectiveness of modeling as a powerful tool for counselor training. Further research into the effectiveness of different approaches to supervision in addressing various counselors' training needs, at different points in their development of counseling skills, would appear to be indicated.

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